

Exodus

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Summary: A stranded team of Spartans need to destroy a Covenant Flagship, but end up having to also rescue a group of ODSTs as well.

1. Chapter 1

Prologue

May 23, 2537 13:00 (estimated military time)

"Exobis", Polaris system

Data Log of Corporal James Yumic

I never liked the rain. I could stand the cold; I could stand the wind and chill, but not the rain. Unfortunately that's all it's been doing lately. Our power has been out for the last few days, and the only way I could stay warm is sitting near the boiling water above the broken dam. The Covenant destroyed the dam and the metal still hasn't cooled since.

We have been fighting on this planet for the last few weeks, just my squad of ODSTs, no marines, no air force, and no support. We were left here a few weeks ago after we were dropped. The frigate that dropped us, the "Exobis" was shot down four hours after we dropped. The majority of the remains of the ship fell to the other side of the planet, but we almost got hit by a good chunk of it. We were able to salvage a few guns, and set up 2 bases. A tower and a smaller base were set up at the peak of a mountain along with a helicopter pad. That was with the help of a forty servicemen and vehicles.

All was going fine until the Covenant decided to send a couple strike teams. Eight Hunters, 25 Elites, 86 Grunts, 10 Brutes, and 76 Jackals later, my squad was the only humans left. By the way, those numbers? Those were what we counted on the ground when the fight was over, not how many the Covenant sent. That battle was a week ago. Now we are

held up in the ruins of our former base waiting for them to pick us off.

We have a plan though, at least now we do. On the other side of the river we live on, over a small mountain range, there is a Covenant tower and a gravity elevator linking up to a Covenant cruiser. A kilometer away is a spire and dozens of Covenant huts holding hundreds of troops. That's not even the worst part, above that Covenant cruiser as a Capital ship. Across the destroyed dam is a cave system that countless Covenant have disappeared in. We are guessing that there is something in there that the Covenant cannot handle. The Covenant have stopped using it, instead relying on aerial transport. We are going to scout it out tomorrow morning.

Chapter 1

May, 27, 2537 17:00 (estimated military time)

"Exobis", Polaris system

Byron-226 of the Spartan-II Green Team stood back up, examining the damaged data log. He shifted in his Mark VI MJOLNIR Armor, his golden visor reflecting the sun's rays while his dark green armor absorbed them. He looked around at the carnage. So many bodies lay on the ground, but only Covenant. _In the data log it said the base was in bad shape but this is almost completely gone. _Byron thought. _And these blast marks seem new._ The base seemed to be almost completely leveled. Almost any remains left were now gone, and the little firefight that Green Team just had only added to the carnage.

Byron's comlink suddenly hissed with static. "Contact! Coming from the east!" Byron whirled around, pocketing the data pad in his chest strap and sprinting over to a figure standing in the rubble of the barracks.

"Lots of contact!" Another voice breaks through the static. Byron sees another figure firing a MA5B Assault Rifle, using short controlled burst to take large bugs out of the sky. Drones, he was shooting down Covenant Drones. Byron reached for his M392 DMR, but found it had no clip. He reached down for his ammo belt but felt nothing. _Damn! I knew I should have checked my ammo before picking up the data pad!_

The Spartan next to him threw him a clip. "Last one!" She said before resuming fire. Byron nodded and made sure every bullet counted. There seemed to be no end to them. They almost blocked out the morning sun. The clip soon was out, and Byron found himself frantically searching for a weapon. He found what he needed four meters in front of him. A dead Elite lay on its back, blood pouring from its face; next to him lay a Type-51 Carbine. Byron felt a few bolts of plasma hit him, his shields absorbing the blow. He dove for the carbine and then rolled into a concrete slab, for you couldn't really call it a wall anymore. The Spartan checked his shields: 45%. Byron checks around the corners, to find none of his allies are in sight.

But the drones are still firing, so they can't be dead yet. Byron checks around the corners, finding only Drones; nothing but drones. _They must have a colony or someth- wait a second. _Only Drones_ Byron opened up his team interface on his HUD. Six steady, if not

quick pulses, breathing normal-wait; the breathing pattern of Ben-089 stopped. Suddenly a thin, white line of smoke appeared in the sky as six Drones in a row dropped dead. Ben's breathing returned to normal.

"Sorry I'm late, exploring." Ben's rugged voice comes through the speakers in Byron's helmet. "I found a cave opening, don't know how deep it goes but" His sentence is cut off by another shot of the S99AM Sniper Rifle and a few more Drones exploded. "-It should get us out of the fire."

"Sending you the information now, sir." A feminine, slightly monotone voice said. The voice belonged to the AI unit, Jill. She (if you could call her that) was with Ben, helping with the recon and scouting part of his job.

Byron's HUD flashed a few moments and he ducked to cover. The layout of the situation turned into a 3D pixilated world. The plateau they were on was in an orange color. The stream in the ravine below a pale blue; Byron saw six green dots. Three were situated in the broken barracks near the tower, with the numbers "041", "042", and "043" above them. Peter, Will, and Joe. Those three are spectacular when they are together. They have only been split a few times, leading to terrible results.

The Spartan noticed "226" was actually the closest to the bend in the river 25 meters below. A green dot with "069" above it lay directly behind him; Hannah, the second in command. Of course a green dot with 089 lay on the top of the broken tower. Then there was the ever present giant cloud of red.

The map disappeared over the ridge across the river, but the Spartan knew more were there; not only drones, an entire flagship of Covenant aliens. Looks like there was only one option, follow the ODSs.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2

May 27, 2537 17:10 (estimated military time)

"Exobis", Polaris system

Three Spartans crouched in what remained of a make-shift army barracks. Waves and sheets green plasma and pink needles flew past the little cover they hid behind. Suddenly one of them, the one in the middle, with a large red '**1**' on his left shoulder, gave a hand signal. Just as suddenly, the other two popped up, firing at the cloud of buggers 200 meters in front of them. There was no need to aim, even covering fire could take out a good 7 of them with one clip. The two finished unloading their 32 round clip from their MA5B Assault Rifles and took cover again.

On Byron's map he could see the green dot labeled "041" moving along a broken wall to the tower, with 042 and 043 close behind. Then he saw a 069 right on top of his green dot.

"What's the plan?" Hannah-069 asks him, crouching up against the concrete slab they hid behind. "Because if you don't have one I have

six you can here." Hannah was always on top of things, even though it wasn't her job to do so.

"I've got it." replied Byron, shoving a fresh magazine into the Carbine he still held in his hands. "We will make our way to the entrance of that cave over there, using the destroyed dam as a walkway." The Spartan knew by her silence she was a bit skeptical of his plan. "The rest of the team is either behind that tower or on it." He explained, pointing at the crumbling structure 10 meters away. "And the dam is over there." His finger moved along a line of rubble to the dam, which was roughly 20 meters away. "We jump that." The gloved finger made a little arch shape over the meter "wide gap; "And then make it into those caves right there." Byron finally moved his finger the final 13 meters to the mouth of the cave; in total it was roughly a 50 meter journey through boiling plasma.

Hannah mauled it over. The three seconds for her to think it over seemed like an eternity. While Byron was technically the team leader and highest ranking officer of Green Team, he often ran his plans over with Hannah, since she usually caught anything he missed.

"Jess, can you put a marker on the cave entrance on everyone's HUD?" Hannah asked, and by her voice Byron could tell she was smiling. A dot suddenly popped up on Byron's HUD, answering her question. "Meet you there!" She exclaimed as she sprinted off behind some cover by the tower. Byron locked the Carbine onto his back and picked up some plasma grenades lying about the area. He then threw extra ones at the cloud of buzzing, trying to distract them. Streaks of smoke continued to appear in the sky, showing Ben still held position in the tower.

Byron glanced over at the dam and saw Hannah leap over it, rolling as she landed, and fire at the swarm with her Assault Rifle. The other three Spartans were making their way along the rubble. One would pop up and fire a few bursts as the others followed the wrecked wall that was their cover. They worked in perfect synchronization.

Byron picked up a two Assault Rifles with full clips and got down on one knee, firing arbitrarily at the swarm. He dove into a crater when the rifles clicked, and checked his map. Ben was off of the tower and on the ground half way across the distance from the tower to the dam. _How? _Byron thought, and peaked his head out of the crater. He saw a red oval of light rush across and over the dam.

_Jackal shield, very smart, _Byron thought as a hail of pink needles hit the opposite side of the crater he was in. The Spartan was able to leap out of the crater just as they began to explode. _My turn._ Adrenaline pumped through the Spartan as he made the mad dash to the dam. As he leapt over the gap, however, a barrage of plasma hit him, draining his shields in mid-flight and causing him to fall to the ground on his left side. Byron's vision blurred, he became disoriented. The right side of his head and his right shoulder hurt tremendously. Byron tried to get up, and soon felt hands grabbing at him, and arms wrapping around him; then he blacked out.

Chapter 3

May 27, 18:12

"Exobis", Polaris system

Ben removed the chip that held Jill from the back of his helmet. He handed it over to Hannah, who inserted it into Byron's helmet. Green Team made it into the caves, however to say they escaped alive is questionable. They carried Byron 100 meters into the cave, but the Covenant did not seem to follow. Now they sat there, in a cave nearly 10 meters high and almost 8 meters in width, with four openings.

Well, only Hannah and sat there. Will, Joe, and Peter had each taken one of the openings, only exploring about 50 meters in. Ben took point at the entrance of the cave that they sat in, wielding a M90A Shotgun, knelt down on one knee. Byron lay on a rock ledge, a little bit off the ground; biofoam was, oozing out of his left shoulder, and the left side of his helmet was covered in black.

Saying Byron was an asset to the team was an understatement, in Hannah's book. He far exceeded his role as a leader, making sure the team was always at its best, and that whatever decision he made was best for them. Without him, they would never get out of this alive.

"Analysis done" Jill finally said. The mere second between those two words and Jill's next were so silent that Hannah thought she might have gone deaf. "Vitals normal; Two wounds, one 3rd degree burn on his left shoulder, due to a direct plasma hit. Biofoam has healed it enough to not cause extensive damage. Amputationâ€|" Jill paused, as the rest of Green team returned from the caves. _Come on! _Hannah thought, annoyed at unfortunate timing. "Amputation not required." Jill finished. Hannah let out a sigh of relief. "I wouldn't get your hopes up yet." The AI told them. "The second wound is a due to a plasma bolt to the head."

Hannah's heart sank. She hoped that the armor had protected him from that. She noticed that the black mark stretched across his helmet from almost the lower left side, covering a quarter of the golden visor. No one dared to ask how bad it was.

Jill continued her analysis, "the helmet absorbed most of the damage and heat, and needs extensive repai-" Hannah was sick of hearing this computer talking, she wanted to know what happened to Byron.

"Jill!" The Spartan finally lost her patience. "What is the wound?" More silence, this time due to surprise, and this one was for much longer than a mere second.

"He has lost all hearing in his ear, as well as his ear." She said flatly. "The hairs around his ear are singed, and the cartilage making up his ear is gone." Hannah's heart sank a little more. "Brain damage, little." Jill finished. Hannah's heart rose. "Wake up time, approximately 6 hours." Jill said, completing her analysis.

"You heard her." Hannah said. "Six hours to get our act together before he's up." Hannah had no problem filing Byron's shoes; she had a few times before when he was compromised. Hannah never knew is she

would be able to do it so easily if she knew he wouldn't be taking his position back, though; she had always guessed she could, but never wanted to find out. The rest of Green team had no problem with the temporarily exchange of command either. Ben stood at the entrance, but Peter, Will, and Joe approached her, obviously with something to say. "What did you find?" Hannah looks at the three figures, identical save the "***1**", "***2**", or "***3**" on their left shoulders.

"We found dead ends." Joe and Peter state in unison, so Hannah turned to Will and instantly he gave her a report.

"About 45 meters in the tunnel split off into five separate paths. There was a whole in the floor about a meter wide going straight down, a meter wide whole in the ceiling directly above it going directly up. To the left and right were tunnels at 30 degree slope. One descended, the other ascended. Finally one was directly across from the cave I came from, being level." Will reported without a single pause.

Hannah raised an eyebrow, even though no one could see it. _That sounds extremely precise, according to his description._ She thought in awe. _Those can't just be natural. Someone had to have built them._

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4

May 27, 2537, 18:30

"Exobis", Polaris System

Will strolled through the caves, his helmet's dual flashlights lighting the dark corridors of coffee-brown rock. The tunnels were smooth and cylindrical, giving Will an all too eerie feel about what made these tunnels. They didn't seem to be excavated by any Covenant tools. He held his Assault Rifle at a restful stance, but was ready at any moment to aim and fire. The Spartan only made the lightest sound; his footfalls were so soft they didn't even echo.

Will checked his motion sensor for the fourth time, and again there was only the lonely yellow dot in the center. I guess it was better than being surrounded by red, but he was beginning to miss the two other yellow dots that would usually be to his left. Will stopped for a moment and turned off his light. In front of him there was a single ember dot in the darkness in front of him. Will zoomed his visor in, and could see a small triangular ember in the middle of the void. He turned on his light but nothing was there.

The Spartan looked around and saw that he stood in another four-way intersection, the tunnels stretching out for as far as he could see. A buzzing sound filled his speakers, and Will cringed in surprise and pain, turning them down. At the same time something of significant mass hit his back, causing him to fall over. Will could not catch it or see what it was before buzzing noise stopped, as quickly as it begun, and Will could not tell which tunnel would lead him back.

"Will-043 repor-" Will began, but stopped and remembered that there is no signal in the caves. He turned in circles many times, looking down each tunnel to see if he could find any clues to what tunnel he went down. He took a few steps forward down one but saw something he wasn't expecting; a dark red puddle of liquid came into view. After another two steps, the Spartan could see the source of the puddle, but it was so disfigured he wasn't entirely sure if it was human.

Peter-041 found himself standing just a few meters from a Covenant barricade, only hidden by the corner of rock in the tunnel bend. The tunnel he started in ended its 30 degree slope upwards about 20 meters backwards and had evened out until this sudden shift, when the floor raised 20 degrees upward, leading to the outside of the caverns. _Looks like the Covenant know we're here. _Peter thought as he took a step away. _I guess the only thing now is to turn back and report. _

The sound of metal colliding with soil along with shattering suddenly filled the air, and as Peter whirled around, the sound of hundreds of metallic spheres rolling down stone caused some loose dirt from the ceiling to fall. Peter then witnessed utter chaos as hundreds of plasma grenades flowed down the tunnel and against the wall. Peter began to run, but as he turned he saw a few bolts of blue plasma fly past him, lighting up the tunnel with a faint blue before impacting stone or fading out all together. Judging by the amount of natural light still in the cave in front of him, Peter knew that trying to end this by blowing up the plasma grenades would end badly for everyone. Peter heard the sounds of a ghost's boosting systems kick in and sprinted, diving as he heard the cry of twin plasma cannons firing.

Spinning around, Peter fired duel Magnums at the ghost, aiming for the cannons. After half a clip from each is expended into the cannons, they finally cease, smoldering and broken. Peter leaps up as the ghost begins to charge forward, and leaps in the air when he feels it is close enough. A red smudge passes through his radar and Peter sees the light purple trails from the ghost fly off in front of him. He chucks a grenade into the darkness and hears a scream when the explosion sounds, confirming the kill. He turns to see no Covenant following him.

_Odd, but then again I'm not surprised. _ Peter decides he is far back enough, and fires at the large pile of ocean-blue orbs that had accumulated at the bottom of the incline. As he fires Peter dives to the ground and shuts down his speakers. A magnificent light manages to glow through to his covered face as tremor shakes the entire tunnel. The sound of crumbling instantly follows the explosion, and the Spartan lunges forward, sprinting as deep into the darkness as he can before running into something that causes him to flip.

As he gets up, Peter sees that there is no longer a faint light in any direction. He switches his lights on and is met with a confusing sight. A ghost stands in front of him, unmanned and barely a scratch, save the destroyed cannons and a few bullet indents in the front. This had to have been the same ghost that he encountered just a minute ago, yet that one was destroyed by a grenade. The confused soldier circled the vehicle once before finding something even stranger. Just 11 meters in front of the ghost was a large scorch mark on the ground, which means the ghost was never even effected by

the grenade.

_What caused this to ghost to stop so abruptly, and what happened to the driver? I couldn't have just imagined his screams. _Peter pondered confused, fear starting to nag at him. He didn't want to be here anymore; he began to take off in a sprint, but suddenly halted when a faint buzzing noise filled his speakers.

End
file.